

# What Happens Now:

A booklet to help children who  
have been sexually abused



*Prepared by:*  
Provincial Child Sexual Abuse Advisory Committee  
updated 2011

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*Note to caregivers:*

In this booklet, we have tried to look at the needs and questions of children who have been sexually abused. Depending on the age of your child and his/her level of understanding, you may choose to give this booklet to them to read, or you may choose to review the contents with them. As a caregiver, you can best judge what information your child needs, and when it is appropriate to give it to him/her. There may be some information that does not apply to your child. You are encouraged to use your own discretion.

# Introduction

If you have been sexually abused, you probably have a lot of questions. Some questions you may have are:

What happened to me?  
What will happen next?  
Who can help me?

You can get through this.

People can experience many different feelings after being sexually abused. You might feel:

fear,  
confusion,  
shame,  
anxiety,  
helplessness,  
sadness,  
anger,  
embarrassment, and  
many other feelings.

You are the expert on how you feel.

There may even have been things about the abuse that felt good. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

Sometimes people just feel numb. It is important to remember that each person will react differently. Everyone affected by the abuse may need help and support. Different people may need different kinds of help at different times.

This booklet will explain some of the things that may happen now that you've told about the abuse. Knowing what to expect may make it easier to handle what happens next.

This booklet has a lot of information. Some of the information can be hard to understand. That is okay. You can ask someone you trust to read it with you, so that you can ask as many questions as you need.

Before you read this booklet, it is important to know that:

- What happened to you is not your fault.
- You did the right thing by telling.
- You are not alone.



# What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is what happens when someone takes advantage of a child in a sexual way. Child sexual abuse is a crime. If any of the things in this list were done to you, it was sexual abuse. If —

- you were touched or kissed in a sexual way.
- someone rubbed or touched the private parts of your body in a sexual way.
- someone showed their penis or vagina to you.
- someone made you watch while they did sexual things to someone else, or they got you to look at a picture or a video that showed someone doing sexual things.
- someone touched your private parts with their mouth, or asked you to touch their's with your mouth.
- someone had vaginal or anal intercourse with you (that means that one person's penis is put in another person's vagina or anus).



You did not do anything wrong.

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- someone, other than a person who is trying to help you, tried to watch you when you were getting changed, having a bath or shower, or using the toilet.
- someone took a picture or video of you which showed your private parts or showed you doing sexual things.

There may be other things that were done to you that felt wrong or uncomfortable. If any of these things were done to you, you are not alone. Many boys and girls have been sexually abused. Sexual abuse can happen to boys or girls, rich children or poor children or children of any race or age. It can happen to anyone.

People who sexually abuse children are called “abusers.” An abuser may be either male or female. It could be someone you know and trust. It could be a parent or other family member, babysitter, neighbour, friend of you and your family, teacher or coach. It could be a complete stranger.

No matter who abused you, it is important to understand that it was their fault, not yours.



# *What Are Some of the Things That Happen When a Child Tells?*

After you tell what has happened to you, a police officer and a child protection worker will talk to you. They will probably talk to you in a special room and the conversation will be videotaped. Their job is like putting a puzzle together and they try to get all the pieces.

After they talk to you, the police officer and the child protection worker will talk to other people who may know something about what happened to you. The police officer may also talk to the person who abused you.

The police officer decides if there is enough information to charge the abuser with a crime. Sometimes the police officer has to talk to a lawyer called a Crown Attorney to help make this decision. Sometimes there are pieces of the puzzle that are missing and charges cannot be laid.

Even if the person who abused you is not charged with a crime, it does not mean that people do not believe you, or that it did not happen.

The child protection worker will talk to you and your family about safety. Your safety and the safety of other children is important to everyone.

The child protection worker will also talk about help for you and your family, and will probably give you a phone number you and your family can call for help.

You are  
not alone.



# *What If We Go to Court?*

When someone is charged with a crime, they are given a time when they must go to court. The police officer talks to the Crown Attorney who decides how the information is going to be presented to the judge. Sometimes, this takes a long time.

While you and your family are waiting, it is important for you to be safe. The police and the child protection worker will help in deciding if it is safe for you to see the person who has been charged. The police and the child protection worker will let you know what is going on and answer your questions. Let them know what you are thinking and ask them any questions you might have.

Another person who may be asked to help you and your family is a victim services worker. This person will explain how the court works and what your job will be in court. They will also explain the job of other people who will be in court with you. The victim services worker will help you get ready to tell the judge what happened.

You may have to go to court and tell what happened to you. This is called a preliminary inquiry or a trial. At the trial, the judge listens to what people say. There will be other people in the courtroom too. Other people who will be there are:

- the person who has been charged,
- the judge,
- lawyers,
- clerks,
- police officers,
- sheriff,
- victim services worker,
- your family members,
- family and friends for the person who has been charged, and
- there may be other people in the courtroom as well.

Sometimes you may have to go to court more than once. Your name or picture or anything that might let someone know who you are cannot be put in the newspaper or on television.

You do not need a lawyer in court because you have done nothing wrong. The Crown Attorney is not your lawyer. The Crown Attorney asks questions to people who have information to help tell the facts about what happened so the judge can make a decision. After the judge hears everyone tell their story about what happened, the Judge has to decide what happens next. If the judge decides that the person who has been charged is guilty, then the judge has to decide: how to deal with the person, how to protect other people, and how to make sure this person does not do the same thing again. This means that the judge may:

- order the person to pay a fine,
- order the person to be on probation,
- order the person to attend counselling,
- send the person to jail,
- or a combination of the above.

# Help That Is Available

Help is available for you and everyone else affected by the abuse. There are many places to get help. You can ask the police officer, the child protection worker or the victim services worker about the kind of help you might need. Some of these might include:

- **Police** 911
- **Kids Help Phone** 1-800-668-6868
- **Child Abuse Line** 1-877-341-3101;  
after hours,  
1-800-341-6868

These phone numbers are also inside the front cover of the telephone book. Some other phone numbers for help are:

- **Child and Family Services:**  
Charlottetown 368-5330  
Montague 838-0700  
Souris 687-7060  
Summerside 888-8100  
O'Leary 859-8811

- Community Mental Health:**  
 Charlottetown McGill Centre                    368-4911  
 Charlottetown Richmond Centre                368-4430  
 Summerside    888-8180  
 Montague    838-0960  
 Souris     687-7110  
 O'Leary    859-8781  
 Alberton     853-8670
  
- Sexual Deviance Specialist:**  
368-6391

This booklet contains information you might need to know. It may not answer all of your questions. If you have questions, make sure you talk to someone to get them answered. Remember, there are many people who can work together to help you and your family.

There are many other children who have had similar experiences.

For additional information on this booklet,  
please telephone 368-6712.